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MK NEWS

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We start looking back at highlights of 2014

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Happy Christmas and New Year!

TO ALL OUR READERS AND ADVERTISERS

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COURT: Porridge for Christmas

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VOX POP: Beard baubles views

Chocablock

A huge thanks to everyone as selection box donations hit record 833

BY JESSICA DUNCAN
jessica.duncan@mk-news.co.uk

Chocs away: MK NEWS and MKWeb staff with just some of the donated selection boxes

MK NEWS is thanking our readers for their generosity after a new record was set in our Christmas Selection Box Appeal.

With your help we have more than doubled last year's total of 300 – with a whopping 833 handed in for The Henry Allen Trust.

Henry's mum Dawn, a founder of the charity that supports children with cancer, said she was 'completely overwhelmed' by the support and felt very emotional picking up the large piles of boxes from our office.

"We were expecting maybe 200, but we have been so touched by all the companies, nurseries and individuals that have come together to show us their support, it means so much," said Dawn,

"Delivering the boxes will just spread Henry's happiness and we hope he will be proud of us."

Dawn and Mark Allen, Henry's dad, will be delivering some of the boxes tomorrow (Christmas Day) to children at Milton Keynes Hospital, alongside Mickey and Minnie Mouse and Frozen's Elsa from Corina MK Mascots and Costume Hire.

The chocolate treats are also being delivered to hospitals in Northampton, Stoke Mandeville and Oxford, where sick children from Milton Keynes are also treated.

CLIC Sargent, which not only helps sick children in our area but treats children with cancer – as the Allens experienced first-hand – will also receive some of the boxes.

After touching the hearts of the city with an appeal to get treatment abroad, Henry died aged four from neuroblastoma, a childhood cancer that affects the nervous system.

This year marked the first anniversary of the Bletchley boy's death and the charity continues to fulfil Henry's last wish to help other children with cancer.

More than 100 of the 833 boxes have already been delivered to children and their families who are receiving treatment for cancer at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and CLIC Sargent.

One Bletchley mum told MK NEWS how much of a difference the small gift has made to her 18-month-old daughter, who has been treated for tumours behind her eyes and in her brain since birth.

Gemma Bawn, 21, said: "Skyla-Mae loves chocolate and she tried to live on it during her chemotherapy.

"The Selection Box Appeal is such a nice idea and helps me try and be positive."

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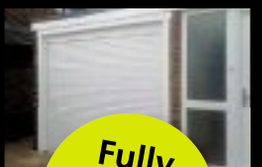

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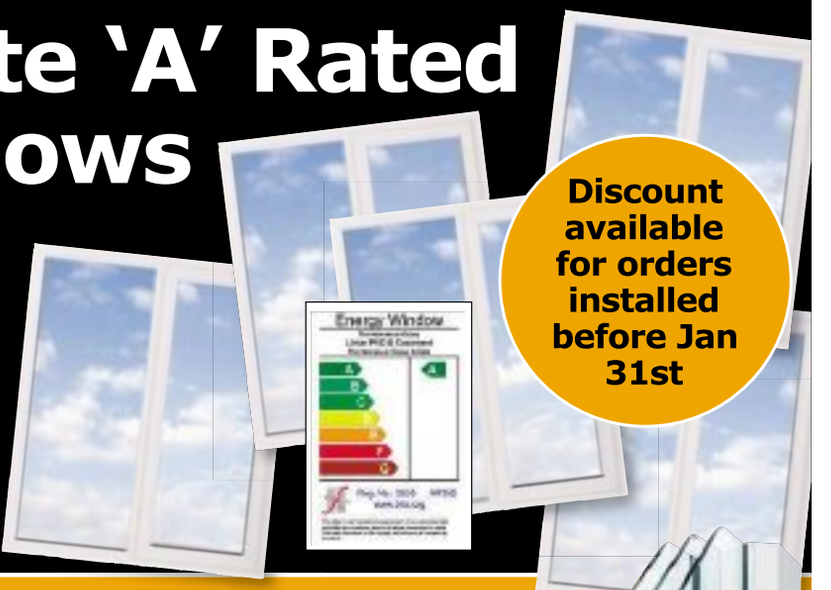

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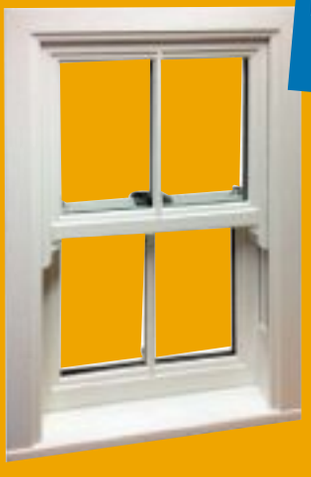

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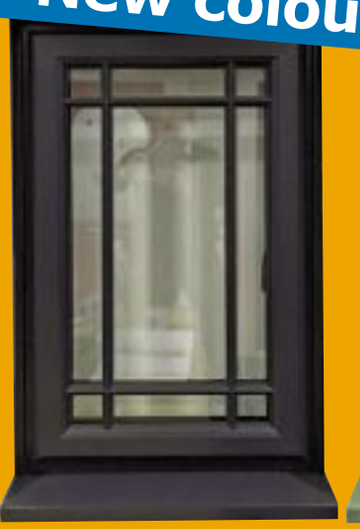

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It is jingle tills all the way to Christmas and beyond as Milton Keynes decides to hit the shops

We asked shoppers 'What do you think of the Boxing Day sales?'

"I remember when people would queue Christmas Day night outside Harrods ready for the Boxing Day opening. They are different now from what they were, you think something is a bargain but then it goes down again."
Cheryae Weedon, 56, from Bletchley

"I don't think it is that big a deal anymore, there is a sale pretty much every weekend. It is great for me doing last minute shopping now, but I won't be going out on Boxing Day."
Debbie Lawrence, 28, a former Next employee from Emerson Valley

"The sales are a bit poor, the prices are the same as during the year. The deals are no different to a month ago, people get tricked by the sales and if you are not careful you spend more money than you would have done."
Richard Setter, 50, from Deanshanger

Stocking up: Doriel Alie, *right*, and Milarn Harris. Below, Jason King, *left* and Paul Creaser

The last minute rush

THOUSANDS of people have been descending on the Tesco Extra mega store at Kingston to grab some last-minute items before tomorrow.

One of those packing in some late shopping was Doriel Alie, 34, from nearby Willen along with her daughter Milarn Harris, nine.

"We've come just to get the basics for the dinner. So we have got a turkey, some Yorkshire puddings, a chocolate gateau and plenty of stuffing."

Paul Creaser, 49, was shopping with his partner Jason King, also 49.

He said: "We're doing the traditional turkey Christmas dinner this year, so we've had to come and get lots of cutlery and plates and stuff."

Bag a bargain time

BY JESSICA DUNCAN
jessica.duncan@mknews.co.uk

AT LEAST 100,000 people visited the centre:mk on Panic Saturday and more are expected to visit the Shopping Centre for the Boxing Day sales.

Saturday saw £1.2billion spent nationally and stores braced themselves for the extra footfall by opening longer hours and making sure they had more staff on the shop floor.

James Waugh, centre director at the centre:mk said: "Some stores are continuing to experience record-breaking levels of sales."

There have been a number of new shops open in the centre:mk this year and Mr Waugh added: "Our latest additions, Jigsaw, the White Company and Jessops, will also no doubt continue to attract visitors from throughout the region."

But will you be getting up early on Boxing Day to grab yourself a bargain? Or will you even start looking on Christmas Day?

Sales have already started at some stores, including Apricot and BHS, but the popular Next sale will start at 6am on Boxing Day.

To encourage bargain hunters, parking will be free across the city centre and intu Milton Keynes and the centre:mk will open from 9am to 6pm.

Tempting offer: There will be large discounts available at the centre:mk

Factfile: Guide to some great offers

- **Next: 50 per cent off or less.**
- **Kurt Geiger: up to 50 per cent off**
- **Castle Galleries: Up to 50 per cent off on selected art**
- **L'OCCITANE: Up to 50 per cent off selected items**
- **Scott's: Up to 50 per cent off brands such as Adidas, Pretty Green and Fred Perry**
- **The White Company: Up to 40 per cent off**
- **The Fragrance Shop: Sale up to 70 per cent off**
- **Tempur: 20 per cent off all products including Mattresses, bases and pillows and 30 per cent of all bed linen**
- **Yours: Up to 50 per cent off selected lines**
- **Regis: £20 off selected GHDs. Ann Summers: up to 50 per cent off**
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Dilemma: Stephanie Gerra with her mother Isabel, *left*. Above: Rafaello and Isabel on their wedding day. Milton Keynes Council says the couple will spend Christmas together

Reunited for Christmas

MILTON Keynes Council has defended its decision not to reunite an elderly couple in the same care home over the festive season – and has insisted it will arrange for them to be with each other on Christmas Day.

Raffaello Gerra, 84, suffered a stroke in October and doctors recommended he was not suitable for independent living at home.

But according to his daughter Stephanie, the council ignored other recommendations for Mr Gerra to join his wife of 50 years Isabel, 70, who suffers with dementia and resides at Ashby House Care Home in Eaglestone.

She has now set up an online petition on www.change.org demanding the council follow doctors orders and home the couple together.

Posting in her online blog, Stephanie wrote: "Sadly, I learned that despite determined protestations to the contrary from the social services concerned, it would seem that important, end-phase-of-life transitions like dad's are often ultimately decided, not so much by the human and family needs which should be paramount here, but by the powers of protocol, legislation and ultimately, available funding.

"So this weekend's upsetting news is that Milton Keynes Placement Panel is not enabling dad's reunion with mum at Ashby House any time soon, if at all.

But a council spokesman said that while Raffaello and Isabel would have to continue to live in different care homes, they are arranging for the couple to spend Christmas Day together.

The spokesman added: "We are very sympathetic to the circumstances of Mr and Mrs Gerra and are doing everything we can to find the best outcome for all concerned.

"We will of course be arranging for and supporting Mr Gerra to share Christmas Day with his wife at Ashby House.

MKNEWS BRIEFS

Tongwell accident

A MAN was airlifted to the John Radcliffe Hospital on Friday after a car and a lorry crashed on the V11 Tongwell Street. He is still being treated.

Noisy flat closed

POLICE and MK Council have closed a flat in Cornwall Grove, Bletchley, after occupants were causing nuisance. The property closure order issued by Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court is for the next three months.

Multi-storey car park

A £30MILLION multi-storey car park at John Lewis is set to be approved by MK Council's Development Control Committee on January 8.

Arrests at airport

POLICE have arrested Paul John Scott in connection with the murder of Francis Brennan – who admitted a stabbing at the National Bowl. The 32-year-old, from Liverpool, was arrested as he flew into East Winch Airfield in Norfolk last Tuesday.

Jail for knife attack

Two men have been jailed for a racially motivated attack on a man in Bletchley in May. Ryan Boon, 22, of Cleeve Crescent, Bletchley and Charlie Righelato, 20, of Rydal Way, will together serve 21 years.

£22m bid to fill our potholes

BY JAMES AVERILL
james.averill@mk-news.co.uk

MILTON Keynes Council is set to receive the biggest share of funds for a unitary authority in the South East to tackle potholes.

The council will receive £22,616,000 from the Government over the next five years.

The announcement by Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin comes just a matter of weeks after the A509 through the city was named as one of the worst roads for pothole claims in the country.

Mr McLoughlin has underlined the importance of the UK's roads and how vital it is they are maintained.

Around 18million potholes will be fixed across the country between 2015 and 2021 costing £6billion.

The Department for Transport allocates funding to local authorities based on need, so councils with larger highway networks receive more of the funding.

Mark Morrell, also known as Mr Pothole, is a campaigner who is pressuring the Government and local councils to improve their roads.

Mr Morrell, who visits Milton Keynes regularly to see family and friends, told MK NEWS: "While focussing on grid roads is important, I think more attention needs to be paid to the city's estate roads.

"They do need to do more to tackle potholes in Milton Keynes and hopefully this extra funding will help the council do that. It cannot do it without that money from the Government."

What do you think to the announcement? letters@mk-news.co.uk

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MK LETTERS

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Surgeries' poor health

THIS week marks 20 months since Willen Village Surgery was closed.

More than 200 people have signed an online petition and many have shared their personal experiences.

People from Broughton, Bradwell, Stantonbury, Gifford Park, Old Park Farm, Downs Barn and Newport Pagnell, say they are waiting weeks for appointments because of the knock-on impact on other surgeries.

Families with sick children say they are struggling to see a doctor. Pensioners say they are having to pay for taxis or take several buses.

For people with long-term conditions, this is not just an inconvenience, it is damaging their quality of life and stopping them getting better. I have sent these comments directly to NHS England and demanded that it listens to local people.

The NHS winter crisis has now arrived but the crisis in access to doctors has not been addressed. This local crisis in access to NHS services is also a crisis of Westminster politics.

After the intervention of our local MP, a meeting on the issue with the Secretary of State for Health and even a visit by the Health and Social Care Minister, it is clear that the Government is either unwilling or unable to help.

Emily Darlington
Labour's parliamentary candidate for Milton Keynes North

Driven from the lake

I sympathise with the small businesses of Willen Lake (*'Business dries up for lake firms', MK NEWS, December 10*).

I walk there most days and sometime cycle around the lakes. I have noticed a decrease of visitors. I am lucky this time of year to see a dozen other walkers in the park at the moment. The car park opposite the retirement village used to have a few dozen cars in during the day, today – one and that is not unusual.

When I used to arrange events in Campbell Park Bowl, The Parks Trust used to give us the place for free as long as we did not charge entry. This was because, I was told, it had a commitment to get people into the park and I understood that was written into its foundation document.

If this is the case, charging for parking is ridiculous and against what it was set up to do as a custodian of the parks for the public of Milton Keynes.

I know it brings in income for The Parks Trust and with government and now council cuts obviously biting it probably needs more income-type funding to be able to run. However, the lame statement in response to the article is hardly encouraging.

"Charges at our car parks are set at what we consider to be reasonable" – parking is charged up to 10pm at night. At this time of year who is going there at that time? Only those who use the gym and any other places that are open at that time.

"We have not received any complaints about parking...this year". Sounds like a politician speaking and so what about previous years?

Has The Parks Trust measured the actual effect on footfall in the park at all times of day and all days of the week – not just when there is a special event on? What are the figures? That would be nice to know.

If it is serious about having businesses in there it should at least provide the facility for those that use the business to get a parking charge refund from the business they are going to. This is done in a number of places so is possible.

Perhaps also it ought to conduct a competition for suggestions on how it can cut costs, improve revenue and solve the funding issues it might have before they hit the public and drive people away from Willen to other places – not always other parks.

John Dale LLB(Hons)
Sent via email

Park and ride answer

REGARDING the recent letters and articles in your paper about parking in Milton Keynes. The current car parking availability in MK is ridiculous.

With the current demands on the city, it's difficult to park after 9am, which is a real problem, particularly for those workers who have child care to deal with.

Why can't the council get together with the bus providers and have a park and ride system operating that's effective and good value? The parking situation is getting worse and it should utilise some of the spare space available and provide additional parking. It does not have to be state-of-the-art, just somewhere with adequate lighting that is flat.

How much parking use does the existing coach park next to the M1 have?

Dave Lovett
Sent via email

Fares fair for traffic

IT IS not only parking that is the issue but the traffic around junctions 13 and 14 of the M1 is very bad in rush hours.

Much of this traffic will be travelling to and from businesses in the city centre, so perhaps it is possible to solve the two problems together.

One thought is park and ride sites close to the motorway junctions with the buses going to city centre and business parks.

The bus fare could be similar to the parking charge for a day to encourage use. Perhaps free parking at this site for those willing to walk or cycle from there to their place of work would encourage greener transport solutions.

David Thomas
Sent via email

Toilets get more visits

IF THE grant to MK Gallery goes ahead, what a monstrous waste of money.

The gallery is presently run for a minority by a minority. Anything trendy, offensive, challenging to art or skill, with hyped up banal ideas can be seen there.

Critics of the project will be dismissed by the untalented 'installation' industry as 'behind the curve' philistines. These people rarely lift a paintbrush, or express an idea understandable to ordinary folk. So we can expect this project to be applauded by a bunch of snooty non-achievers with their hands deep in our pockets.

I hope MK Council does not intend to finance any part of this trophy project. Those citizens denied access by the council to the Citizens Advice Bureau could of course spend their days studying nonsense art in the new gallery café.

In the 10 years, or so, of its existence the gallery has managed to attract about 80,000 visitors, the equivalent of 25 per day. Most public toilets do better than this, and the experience is better.

MK Gallery is an unbelievable insult to the people of MK who have quite rightly ignored it.

Philip Blowfield
Sent via email

Jon Brett's City Life

His column written exclusively for MK NEWS

Special time to make changes for the better

OVERCROWDED shopping centres, nowhere to park, office parties and festive nights out can only mean one thing…it's CHRISTMAS!

It's hard not to get swept away with the excitement of the season and yes, sadly, we all know that the real meaning of Christmas is all but forgotten, but hey, who doesn't love a present?

Yes, it's commercial, garish, over-hyped and expensive, but it's only once a year. And ultimately, it's a time of forgiveness, goodwill and, importantly, reflection. And Milton Keynes is a good city in which to reflect.

No longer the shiny 'new city' it is still so often proudly referred to as, but a city approaching its 50s – a little grey around the edges, with aching joints and a straining infrastructure. Its new estates bear no resemblance to the original planners' dream and lots of the ideas which made Milton Keynes unique now need to be replaced or refurbished. Of this, I am sure all readers will agree.

And so perhaps this is a time of year to look within and see what changes can be made to better yourself, while at the same time helping others.

In this internet era of Black Friday, Cyber Monday, order today for delivery tomorrow…slow down! Appreciate your surroundings and what you have, not just what you desire.

I'd like to thank you all – whether you agree with me or not – for reading and I wish you all a very happy Christmas.

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Tree topples onto flats

Closed off: High winds are thought to have caused a large tree to fall onto a block of Bletchley flats

RESIDENTS of a three-storey block of flats in Bletchley have described how they returned home on Thursday to find a large tree had fallen on the building.

Firefighters were called to the flats in Turing Gate at 2.11pm where the tree had collapsed onto the new flats – believed to be due to the high winds. The adjoining Sherwood Drive was closed, although the road was soon reopened.

One resident said: "I arrived home and the place was just swarming with firefighters. At first I didn't really see what was going on, but then I noticed the tree leaning on the back of the house."

The tree was removed by Salcey Arborcare and Forestry.

One worker said: "We got a platform up and took the top of the tree away to get the pressure off the roof."

Pair injured in armed burglary

BY NISHA MAL
editor@mknews.co.uk

A WOMAN was taken to hospital and a man injured during a burglary.

At about 8.30pm on Wednesday last week a group of men knocked on the door of a property in Buckingham Road, Bletchley.

After the man opened the door, one of the offenders struck him over the head, and he fell to the ground.

The offender then demanded cash and stole some money before leaving.

The men were all wearing dark clothing and balaclavas, or other face coverings.

At least three of the offenders were carrying weapons, including a wooden bat and an axe.

The 26-year-old man suffered injuries to his head, hand and shoulder and was taken to hospital for treatment.

He has now been discharged.

During the incident a 25-year-old woman jumped out of the first floor window of the building and suffered serious leg injuries.

She was taken to Milton Keynes Hospital for treatment and yesterday was in a stable condition.

Thames Valley Police is now appealing for witnesses following the aggravated burglary.

Police Constable Sarah Lucas, from Milton Keynes Police Station, said: "This was a frightening incident for those involved but officers are doing everything they can to track those responsible.

"At this time we believe that this is not a random attack.

"Officers are in the area conducting enquiries and I would urge anyone who has any concerns to speak to them."

Anyone with information is urged to call the Thames Valley Police Enquiry Centre on 101.

Alternatively people can call Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

Doctor could be struck off

A LOCUM doctor who worked at Milton Keynes Hospital faces being banned from the profession, after being convicted of theft by a Polish court.

He claimed he took a camera and wallet from an unlocked Polish hotel room so he could be a 'knight in shining armour' when he returned them to a 'pretty lady', a tribunal has heard.

Dr Robert Barnett, who had worked as a junior registrar at Milton Keynes Hospital until last week, tried to persuade the independent Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service panel into letting him keep his job. The panel came to a finding of impairment.

The hearing continues.

Visitors still wait for Wonderland refunds

VISITORS to Winter Wonderland Milton Keynes are still waiting for refunds a year after the event.

Lorenzo Franco was forced to close the event in Campbell Park in December 2013 after just one day, following thousands of complaints from visitors regarding the Santa Claus, ice-rink and stalls.

Disappointed visitors were promised full refunds and businesses like D&D Marquees, in Northampton, are still owed £3,000 after supplying equipment for the event.

MK NEWS has tried to contact Mr Franco again this week, but he has not responded to any of our messages.

A trading standards investigation by Milton Keynes Council, which ended in July, resulted in Mr Franco receiving a caution for misusing logos belonging to Arriva and MK Dons.

Last year disappointed families were able to use their tickets, after residents organised a Christmas event at the former MKIce.

Mini Wonderland MK was held again in Wolverton this year thanks to the same residents.

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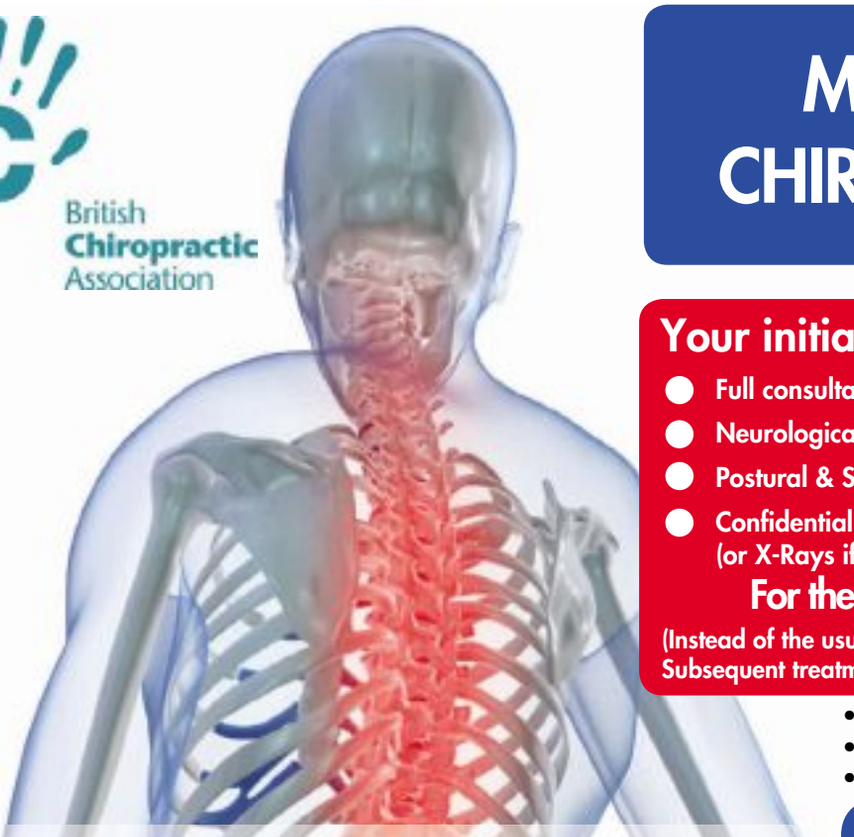

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Here to help: Laura Chapman and Ken and Sonya Tomkins outside the After 8 Safe Hut on Thursday

The flip side to wild nights out

The After 8 Safe Hut outside Xscape has been saving lives in more ways than one this festive period. Reporter JESSICA DUNCAN spent Thursday night with volunteers and St John Ambulance at the hut

ON THURSDAY I performed a small service that could save lives. I did this quite simply by getting those that were worse for wear into a taxi or giving girls some flip flops instead of them walking around barefoot.

However, last weekend a man's life was actually saved by volunteers at the hut after he was found unconscious in Wonder World after drinking and taking drugs.

Thanks to the volunteers and members of St John Ambulance he was taken to Milton Keynes Hospital by ambulance at 3.45am.

He spent the night in A&E but has now been discharged.

Paul, who was one of the volunteers on the night, said: "We had one young lady in a bad state, who needed medical treatment, and another gentleman who was much worse who needed to be taken to hospital.

"Without the hut and the presence of the ambulance service close by, both of these people would have been in serious trouble and were effectively helpless."

On Thursday night I learned about 'spikeys', which are plastic caps that go into bottles with room for a straw to stop your drink being spiked.

Through a straw: Spikeys were handed out to revellers to stop drugs being put in their drinks

Most partygoers just saw them as funny straws but handing them out at the start of the night not only gets people thinking about the possible dangers, but also deters others from attempting to spike drinks.

The next thing that came to our attention was people's feet.

There were lots of Christmas parties on Thursday and girls wearing heels were out in force. Many took them off towards the end of the night, which is when the Safe Hut's pink flip flops came in handy.

With other volunteers I ran up and down outside Xscape asking what size feet girls had and handing out the footwear to stop revellers from cutting their feet on glass or other objects.

One paramedic, who did not wish to be named, said: "Partygoers think they are invincible on a night out, especially after they have had a lot to drink. Cuts to feet and low body temperatures are what we treat most people for."

The next challenge was at the end of the night when the bars and clubs closed at around 4am and people wanted to get home.

With queues building up for taxis we helped hand out numbers or, in some cases, booked taxis for them.

Without this help it was quite clear that some people would not have got home safely.

As well as flip flops and taxi numbers, volunteers handed out bottles of water, condoms and helpful advice on things like how long it takes alcohol to leave your system.

Over the weekend alone, more than 400 items were handed out including, 64 bottles of water, 67 spikeys, 54 flip flops, 30 condoms, 28 lip balms and six foil blankets

You may not realise how invaluable the help of the volunteers is – or even be able to remember what they did – but I have seen first hand how vital this service is.

The After 8 Safe Hut, backed by MK NEWS and MKWeb, will be located outside Xscape between 11pm and 4am over the Christmas and New Year period.

Flipping great!: Comfortable footwear and water were available

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Tony Byrne
Chartered and Certified Financial Planner
Author of Wealth Magic

Also by the time they retire they have normally paid off their mortgage and personal debts, children have left home and they are likely to have come into money from an inheritance, pension lump sum or a windfall.

On the other hand certain expenses will rise since their weekends have now increased from 2 days to 7 and we all spend more money in our leisure time at weekends.

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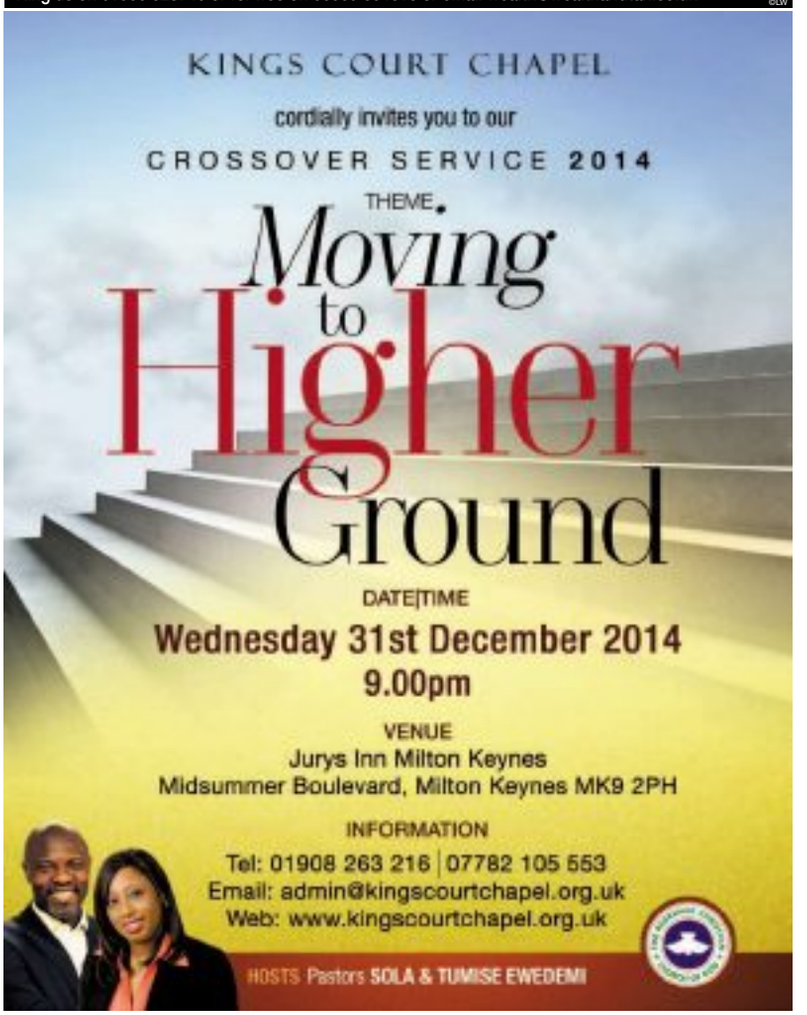

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Paul is county's oldest BMX rider

BY SARAH LEE
editor@mk-news.co.uk

A 68-YEAR-OLD BMX rider is wheely looking forward to taking part in the world championships next summer.

A member of the MK BMX Club based in Pineham, Paul Mounsey says the sport, which he took up after being made redundant, is 'all about the fun'.

"For me, BMX racing is a journey – a competitive journey," said Paul, who's UCI racing number is GBR19460906 indicating he was born in 1946.

"After being made redundant at 63, a friend of mine told me to get a mountain bike – and that's where it all began.

"I have a history of motor cross and race car driving, so the competitive edge is something I really enjoy."

Paul, who also does 4X racing, qualified 29th in a field of 36 for the 4X Pro Tour in Scotland earlier this year.

He also came third in the East Anglia summer races with MK BMX as part of the over 45s category – the oldest group he could ride with.

Saddled up: Paul Mounsey will take part in BMX chamionships

Currently the oldest rider in Buckinghamshire, he will be 69 by the time the BMX World Championships take place in Belgium in July.

"I'm not slow, but I'm not fast. I am realistic and realise my age hinders me slightly," added Paul, who lives in Buckinghamshire.

"There are so many riders out there that you've read about and there are people that have been on top of their game for many years in BMXing and I'll be rubbing shoulders with those guys and I enjoy that."

"2015 is the year for me. I am going to the gym twice a week and will be riding two to three weekends a month. I hope the hard work will pay off!"

Paul's next race will be with MK BMX on Sunday.

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FROSTS ...naturally

Growing cash: *Left to right*, David Young, Graham Douglas and Rob Taylor from the air ambulance

Funds long-runner

THE owner of an allotment plot in Newport Pagnell has helped raise more than £1,500 for charity with his homegrown runner beans.

David Young, 77, gives away half of his allotment plot in Lakes Lane to grow the beans and sell them on – but every penny goes to charity.

The beans are handed over to butcher Graham Douglas, who owns GJ Douglas in the town's High Street, where he sells them on David's behalf.

This year's recipient was the Thames Valley and Chiltern Air Ambulance, which received a cheque for £1,554.

Hospital hit by intensive week

BY JAMES AVERILL
james.averill@mknews.co.uk

MILTON Keynes Hospital was not spared last week as A&E units across the country faced their toughest week since 2010.

Only 78 per cent of patients at Milton Keynes A&E were seen within four hours in the week leading up to December 14, which is down from 91 per cent the week before.

This is some way below the 95 per cent target set for A&E departments, although only six across the country managed to meet the target.

Last week, more people were admitted to hospital across the country than in any previous week on record.

When the minor injuries unit at MK Hospital was included the figure rose to 87.6 per cent of patients being seen within four hours.

The hospital's chief executive Joe Harrison said: "I think there is a growing recognition that our staff are doing a very good job. But the size and capacity of the hospital is definitely an issue here."

Comments on facebook

- **Shireen Koldemir: It is far too small. I don't think they ever expected MK to grow as much as it has.**
- **Anthony Martin: Far too small. Four hours to get seen in A&E is just dreadful, you should be seen within the hour!**
- **Kaz Jayne Brock: It is far to small. It hasn't grown with the rate that Milton Keynes has. It just can't cope with the volume of people through its doors.**

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A Flawless crib

WHEN Flawless take to the stage in Peter Pan at Milton Keynes Theatre they wow audiences with their incredible choreography – but few people realise what panto stars get up to after the show.

The answer is a bit of lounging around, some visits to the physiotherapist, a few games of FIFA and plenty of sleep.

The dancers have made themselves at home in their temporary crib at Cotels' Vizion apartments in the city centre, which are above Sainsbury's.

Home from home: Flawless relaxing at their apartment

10,000 new places as schools expand

BY NISHA MAL
editor@mk-news.co.uk

MORE than 10,000 new school places will be created in Milton Keynes over the next four years in a £160million programme that will see seven new schools built and 12 existing ones expanded.

The move should ease the chronic lack of school places available in the area. In June it was revealed that Oxley Park Academy was running so low on spaces that children were only being allocated to the school if they lived within 320 metres of its entrance.

Some of the schools set for expansion include Brooklands Farm Primary, Oakgrove and Jubilee Wood Primary in Fishermead.

Brooklands Farm Primary, in Fenn Street, is set to open a second campus for an initial 90 children in September 2015. The new 630-place school will sit alongside a new community facility.

Headteacher Maxine Low said: "The expansion of Brooklands Farm Primary will allow us to continue to meet the needs of the inspirational learning community."

An extra 300 spaces will be created at Oakgrove and a £12million investment will create 630 primary places and a 39-place nursery on a new site close to the main school, due to open in 2016.

Councillor Norman Miles, cabinet member for children and school improvement at Milton Keynes Council, said: "This is very welcome news for Milton Keynes. As a council we are committed to ensuring that all our children have a place in a good local school. In the face of a tough economic climate, I am proud that we are working corroboratively with schools to plan well and continue to make the education of our children and young people a priority."

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MK – Stansted	£72.50	£82.50	£92.50	£140.00
MK – East Midlands	£72.50	£82.50	£92.50	£140.00
MK – St Pancras (Eurostar)	£85.00	£100.00	£110.00	£145.00
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Honeymoon saved after price mix-up

BY NISHA MAL
editor@mk-news.co.uk

Perfect day: Chris and Genevieve Lovelock at their wedding

IT WAS a joyous day for one couple when they tied the knot on Friday after winning a honeymoon in a radio competition.

The win saved the day for Chris and Genevieve Lovelock after a mix-up over a honeymoon to Venice with an online travel agents.

Having paid the deposit the couple, who met at university and have been together for five years, were told they could pay the rest at a later date, but didn't spot a catch in the small print.

Chris, 22, said: "It would have been £1,400 and we were unaware that if we didn't pay it all by a certain time the price was going to double.

"We simply couldn't afford it. I was very disappointed but Genevieve was completely gutted. When people asked she would get really upset and it was like a black cloud hanging over her."

This happened one month ago but last week a Christmas miracle happened after Genevieve entered a competition with Heart FM and won a week-long skiing trip to Italy.

Chris said: "We were in the car on the way to work and the radio was on. Genevieve texted in without me even knowing and the radio station phoned her.

"She had to answer six questions about Christmas as quickly as possible. It was such a spur of the moment thing and before we knew it we'd won.

"Genevieve was so shocked she had cold sweats and we felt like it was fate that we'd won.

"It was the massive boost we needed before the wedding as we've had hiccups throughout our engagement.

"My wife deserves this – she does so much for everyone."

The couple are hoping to book the trip to Italy for January next year to mark five years since they first met.

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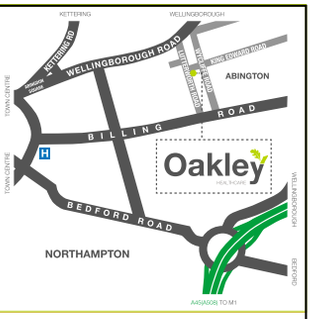

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Lifeline is offered to lonely at Christmas

On call: Samaritans such as Kerry Gregory are ready to comfort the lonely at Christmas

BY NISHA MAL
editor@mk-news.co.uk

DEPRESSION, isolation and financial problems are struggles people face throughout the year, but between the Christmas and New Year period charities receive more calls than at any other time.

Last year the Samaritans received 244,000 in this period alone. Milton Keynes volunteer Kerry Gregory said: "The biggest difference this year is people phoning in with financial problems – people have lost their jobs, or have had their hours cut down.

The 39-year-old, who works at the centre in Fishermead, added: "Loneliness strikes for the older community who have no family close by."

Dan, who also works at the centre, said: "We find it gets busy this time of year because people are more aware of being on their own and find it very hard.

"Loneliness, stress, depression, family-related issues and loss are some of the issues I have noticed crop up around this period."

Dan has worked for the Samaritans for two years and has chosen not to reveal his full identity because of the nature of the job.

In a recent survey carried out by the charity it was discovered 48 per cent of men say they feel more worried over the festive season.

Dan added: "The issue is men find it hard to seek help and can feel desperate. We are currently trying to encourage more men to get in touch with us."

"People aren't comfortable talking about stress and anxiety because they feel like we should all be happy at Christmas."

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Officers sent to fill jail staff gap

BY JAMES AVERILL
james.averill@mk-news.co.uk

HMP Woodhill will be sent 32 officers from high security prisons to address staff shortages.

More than 230 prison officers are being asked to work in other prisons in the run-up to Christmas as governors across England and Wales face a major staffing crisis, plans seen by the Howard League for Penal Reform indicate.

The charity has been shown official documents, drawn up in the autumn, which outline measures to tackle staff shortages in prisons during November and December.

They identify more than 50 prisons that will be asked to provide officers to plug gaps elsewhere in the system.

Prisons including Frankland, Full Sutton, Long Lartin, Wakefield and/or Whitemoor will be sending officers to the Milton Keynes category A prison.

It comes after a year of reports that staffing levels are too low at the prison.

Under pressure: Woodhill Prison is to be assisted by 32 officers

In June, the then governor David Hutton said it was compromising the safety of both staff and inmates.

A specific document about staffing on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day indicates that about 56 officers will be asked to work in other prisons on these bank holidays.

The move comes after Howard League research revealed that the number of frontline officers in public-sector prisons has been cut by 41 per cent in less than four years.

Prisons Minister Andrew Selous said: "This is another example of the Howard League twisting the facts to try and paint a picture of disarray in the prison system.

"Sending prison officers on detached duty is a sensible and proportionate way of managing temporary staffing shortfalls and is something the service has used for over 20 years."

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2014: Review of the year

JANUARY

- The body of Premier Inn guest Steven Rosario was dragged from Willen Lake. Mr Rosario had left a note saying 'must test life jacket', but coroner Tom Osborne ruled he died as a result of the cold water triggering a heart problem.
- Flames engulfed an industrial estate in Newport Pagnell after the Liebherr warehouse in Renny Park Road caught fire. The inferno destroyed the building, which contained 7,000 gas filled refrigerators. The blaze was found to be an accident.
- Transport minister Susan Kramer opened the world's first all electric bus route in the city.
- Newport Pagnell's John McCafferty became the longest living heart transplant survivor in the world, 31 years after his operation.
- Manchester United paid tribute to brave Levi Henson, 13, who sadly lost his battle with cancer.
- Parents at Coffee Tots pre-school in Coffee Hall demanded the council find them a new home. It did and it opened in April.

FEBRUARY

- MK became even greener as world renowned musical Wicked arrived along with the witches at Milton Keynes Theatre,
- Olympic gold champion long jumper Greg Rutherford bared all in a naked photo shoot for Attitude magazine.
- The rain poured down, with many homes and playing fields

Clockwise, from top: Liebherr warehouse fire, cast members of Wicked, a body is recovered from Willen Lake and Levi Henson

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Review of the year: 2014

Clockwise, from top. A tree toppled onto Alan and Val Gurden's car in Bletchley during storms, Dawn and Mark Allen at MK Rose, Devon Byrne and Denise Ilett

being deluged with water as the floods caused chaos.

- The wind played its part too, as the Valentine's Day storms uprooted trees across the city. Bletchley couple Alan and Val Gurden had a lucky escape as one fallen Leylandii tree narrowly missed the couple's bedroom.
- There was love in the air on Valentine's Day nonetheless as Milton Keynes South MP Mark Lancaster married MP Caroline Dinenage.
- MK NEWS launched its appeal to commemorate the memory of four-year-old Henry Allen, who died from neuroblastoma, by erecting a pillar at MK Rose in his memory. Decisions for the Rose's pillars will be made in summer 2015.

MARCH

- Wolverton lost a much-loved member of the community when Denise Ilett died. The town stalwart, who had won a special Britain in Bloom award in 2013, fell down the stairs at her home and passed away on March 13.
- Rumours emerged of a new major water park at the National Bowl, dubbed the biggest in the country. The new leisure development proposed by Moirai Capital has not yet had plans finalised.
- Devon Byrne made history on Shrove Tuesday with her record time of 55.6 seconds in the Olney Pancake Race and Milton Keynes City Orchestra (MKCO) won

Continued: page 22 ▶

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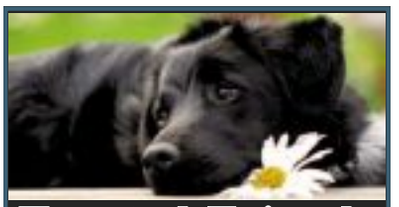

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2014: Review of the year

MARCH: CONTINUED

£25,000 of funding through the MK Community Foundation STEP grant.

APRIL

- Heartthrob Bailey McConnell rose to fame on ITV's Britain's Got Talent. The 15-year-old from Crownhill was unfortunately knocked out before the final, but now has a record deal with RGS Music.
- At the end of the month, a shop keeper was hit on his head with what was believed to be a hammer during a robbery of SpadiniOro Italian Jewellers in Stony Stratford. A person was arrested but was later released without charge.
- The body of Francis Brennan, 25, from Anfield, Liverpool, was discovered. He faced a probable jail sentence for a stabbing at the National Bowl. He had pleaded guilty to wounding, affray and possession of an offensive weapon at a Swedish House Mafia gig at the Bowl in September 2012. His body was found on a Spanish beach.

MAY

- The family of Willen Hospice volunteer Pam Wilson paid tribute to her after she was hit by a car while crossing Watling Street on May 1 and later died from her injuries. They said: "Pam was a wonderful wife and mother. She loved good food, good wine and good company."
- There was shock after elderly

Clockwise, from top: Bailey McConnell, forensics at SpadiniOro, members of Milton Keynes Orchestra and Pam Wilson

MKNEWS

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Review of the year: 2014

Clockwise, from top: Jubilant Labour, Kings of Leon, Peter Andre meets fans and a match made in pugs heaven

wheelchair-bound couple Edward McLaren, 73, and Mary, 72, were found dead at their home in Hills Close, Great Linford. An inquest later found they had died from natural causes.

- Fans queued from 8am on May 28 to meet Peter Andre at intu Milton Keynes, where he signed copies of his latest album.
- Labour took control of Milton Keynes Council from the Conservatives following the elections this month.

JUNE

- The Duchess of Cambridge spent a day at Bletchley Park, home of the codebreakers and where her grandmother Valerie Glassborow was a duty officer during the Second World War.
- Leng Hie Tong was stabbed by her lesbian lover Chooi Cheung after a row over cash. Miss Cheung later received a life sentence.
- Hilary Saunders, 70, thanked three men who came to her aid after she was robbed at a cashpoint in Bradwell High Street.
- Two love struck pugs got married in a £2,000 ceremony complete with wedding dress and tuxedo.
- Nearly 50,000 Kings of Leon fans took to the National Bowl to see the American rock outfit impress the crowd with their classics.
- Much to the disappointment of Top Gear enthusiasts at Olney's Motorama, the 'Stig' that turned up to the event was confirmed by the BBC to be an impersonator.

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Deaths

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24/06/53 - 17/12/14

John passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday 17th December 2014. Loving husband to Isolde, Dad, Grandad, brother and friend to many. Sadly missed by all who knew him.

Interment at Olney Green Burial Ground on Saturday 3rd January 2015 at 1:30pm. Family flowers only, please. Donations if desired to Willen Hospice.

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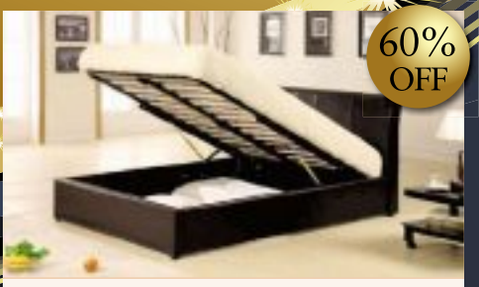

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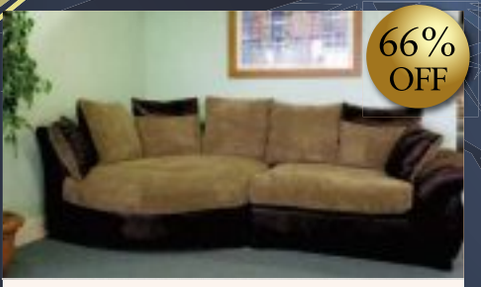

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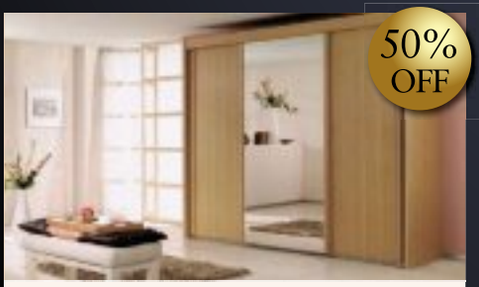

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MILTON Keynes Theatre has had some 'pantastic reviews' for Peter Pan and at MK News we'd like to set you a challenge.

If you've seen the show @MKtheatre and @YourMKWeb would love to hear what you thought on Twitter!

Just how cool are Flawless? How funny is the lovable Smee? How bad is Captain Hook? Tell Twitter what the world is missing. We want to know. Oh yes we do!

Tweet your 140 character review using #MKPeterPan and one lucky winner will win an exclusive signed panto poster and have their tweet printed in next week's paper.

Wishing well: The cast of Milton Keynes Theatre's panto Peter Pan are hoping yours and their festive wishes will come true

A very panto Christmas

T'WAS the night before Christmas and the mischievous little fairy that is the fairy grapevine has taken a sneaky peek backstage at Milton Keynes theatre to find out what the cast of Peter Pan are up to before the big day.

Captain Hook may be known as the baddest baddy in pantoland but I've found out that David Bedella's actually a big softy after stowing away in his dressing room and spotting a canopy of sparkly fairy lights to put him in the festive mood. That's not going to do him any good in maintaining his reputation as the grumpiest man in Neverland.

Bradley Walsh as hapless pirate Smee was caught dozing on the decks between shows (but I think he's actually watching one of his favourite daily TV quiz shows!).

Meanwhile George Ure, Peter himself, said he would like to find lots of tasty treats and some supplies for his trusty Nespresso machine under the tree this year – perhaps that's what keeps him up in the air throughout panto season?

The boys from Flawless are just too cool for school but just like the rest of us we know they're looking forward to a day with their dancing feet up in front of their favourite Christmas movie too. Even those guys have to rest from pop-locking and hip-hopping for one day!

My top fairy pal Tink let on that she's hoping to get a Nando's gift card in her stocking and is looking forward to her chicken feast before her turkey with all the trimmings tomorrow, so she might need more than fairy dust to get her moving on boxing day – perhaps I could help out there.

A sweetheart in real life too, Victoria Tyrell, AKA Wendy, tells me her perfect Christmas can be summed up in three words – 'togetherness, laughing and giving' and she is really looking forward to getting lots of treats for her new puppy this Christmas. I'm not sure how Nana will feel about that!

Tick Tock Crock is helping everyone with the final countdown to Christmas (while of course terrorising Hook at every opportunity) but the cast all asked me to tell MK NEWS readers who have been to visit them at the theatre that they're having a great time here and to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Can you guess who lives in a dressing room like this?

MILTON Keynes Theatre's cheeky little fairy Tinkerbell has been sneaking around backstage the pantomime Peter Pan to bring MK NEWS readers the exclusive opportunity to win a family ticket for four people.

All readers need to do to win the tickets and the chance to meet the all-star cast that includes Bradley Walsh and dance group Flawless, is to guess whose dressing room is in the picture?

Enter by noon on Wednesday, December 31 at www.mkweb.co.uk or send your answer to MK NEWS' address listed on page 6.

Peter Pan is on at Milton Keynes Theatre until January 11.

Leisure or events news? **e-mail** editor@mk-news.co.uk **phone** 01908 689595

Town revs up for vintage car rally

CAR enthusiasts will take to the streets of Stony Stratford on New Year's Day for the annual Vintage Stony event.

Motor fans will gather in The Market Square from 10.30am to see pre-war cars and motorcycles.

Classic cars will be in Cofferidge Close, which is accessed off Silver Street.

From 1pm there will be awards handed out for The Oldest (Car!), The Furthest Travelled, The Judges Take Home Car and the judges' choice of motorcycle.

The free event has been organised by the Stony Stratford Business Association and will be raising money for Willen Hospice.

The popular event is being held in partnership with the Vintage and Classic Vehicle Club, with support from many pubs and restaurants who will be opening especially for the day, which ends at 2pm.

■ If you take any pictures email them to andy.handley@mk-news.co.uk

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MKlife

Comedy Night In MK Gallery

comedynight

GARY Delaney will headline at the Comedy Cow on January 9.

Delaney is a razor sharp one-liner comedian, who is widely regarded as being the most quotable comic on the circuit.

He is a regular guest on Mock The Week and has also appeared on Dave's One Night Stand, Comedy Central's The Comedy Store and Comedy Blue and on Channel 4's Robert's Web.

Caimh McDonnell and Andy White will also be on the undercard on the night.

Doors will open at 7.30pm and the night is suitable for over 18s only.

Tickets cost £10 and to book them go to www.ticketsource.co.uk

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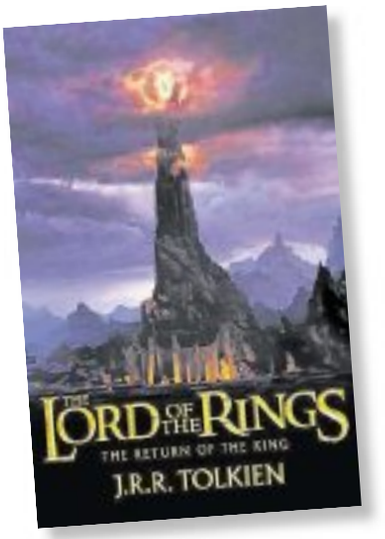

bookreview

IT HAS taken me ages to get through the last Lord of the Rings book and I've decided I much prefer the films, writes Scott Kirk.

I know The Return of the King is an absolute classic and I wanted to enjoy it, but the book is largely about singing songs and eating and I just found it a bit boring.

Tolkien is a superb writer, don't get me wrong, and there's no doubt that this book was, and is, pioneering, but I just think that the film has really brought the tale into the modern era and the book just seems old-fashioned now.

exhibitiontour

JOIN this informal tour of the current exhibition, New City Art Prize, led by MK Gallery assistant Catherine Howe.

No specialist knowledge of art is required.

The exhibition includes photography, sculpture, film and video by leading artists Beatrice Gibson, Siobhán Hapaska, Jimmy Merris and Roger Palmer, who are shortlisted for the inaugural £10,000 MK Community Foundation prize.

The tour takes place on Saturday, January 3 at 2pm and is free, but pre-booking is essential.

To book go to www.mkgallery.org/events/2015_01_03/exhibition_tour/

MKlife newyear

STRUGGLING for ideas this New Year's Eve? Here is a selection of parties being held in MK.

Music venue MK11 in Kiln Farm will have a local band playing rock and indie classics, plus a DJ, until 4am. The night starts at 8pm and tickets are £8 in advance, or £10 on the door, including hot dogs.

Or you could celebrate in the style of The Great Gatsby at the DoubleTree by Hilton next to stadiummk. Enjoy canapes, a four-course meal and dance the night away to the Charleston Swingers. Tickets are £99. To book call 01908 364296.

Enjoy a jazz band, three-course meal and a hog roast at The Swan Inn in Milton Keynes Village. Tickets cost £70 or £25 for a drink and hog roast from 10pm.

vipgaming

WIN a dining and casino experience

THE Casino MK has teamed up with MK LIFE to give you the chance to win a VIP visit.

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The Casino MK is hosting a free Hollywood Glamour New Year's Eve party with live entertainment during the evening from singer-songwriter James Gillespie and free fizz at midnight.

There will be two sittings in Clary's Restaurant and, as The Casino is open 24 hours a day, there's no reason for the night to end until you're ready!

To find out more visit www.thecasinomk.co.uk. To win this exclusive VIP package at The Casino MK just answer the following question:

How many people have visited The Casino MK since it opened in 2013?

A) 100,000
B) 300,000
C) 500,000

To enter visit mkweb.co.uk/competitions You can also send your name, address and daytime phone number to MK NEWS, 1 Diamond Court, Fox Milne, MK15 0DU by December 31. The editor's decision is final

markwatson

IT'S hard to believe Mark Watson has been doing stand-up for 10 years.

The Welshman is bringing his most personal comedy routine, Flaws, to Milton Keynes in the New Year.

Flaws examines Mark's life growing up, the terrifying ageing process and the effects his own flaws have had on his life.

It's not as deep as it sounds, be assured, it will be very, very funny!

Mark Watson is playing at The Stables in Wavendon at 8pm on Tuesday, January 13.

Tickets cost £16 and are moving fast so book soon at www.stables.org to avoid disappointment.

You can also call the venue's box office on 01908 280800.

JAMES Frost from Frosts Garden Centre gives his top tips for all things green over the Christmas season. Read his article in full online at www.mkweb.co.uk

THERE is more than mistletoe when it comes to gardening over the festive season!

Houseplants are regularly bought and given over the Christmas period, so ensure you are giving them as much light as possible and only just keeping moist; they do not need a lot of water.

Azaleas are best watered with rainwater; ensure you keep some in the house to ensure that it is not cold.

Amaryllis bulbs are the only thing that will require water and feed at this time of year to get them into flower.

Outside you should be pruning while plants are dormant, especially on larger woody trees and shrubs – take out dead, diseased and damaged growth before you start looking at shape.

Ornamental vines are also best pruned at this time of year to keep them clear of gutters and windows.

Wisteria plants should have all the growth made since summer cut back to within three or four buds of where it started to grow.

In the vegetable and fruit garden, dig the ground to ensure it gets frosted and helps break down heavier soil over the winter. Apples and pears should now be pruned while they are dormant to ensure an open shape to help ripen fruit.

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We encourage applications from all walks of life and all applications will be considered on merit. It is the company's policy to employ the best qualified personnel and provide opportunity for the advancement of employees including promotion and training and not discriminate against any person because of sex, race, pregnancy, disability, marital or family status, ages, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or trade union membership.

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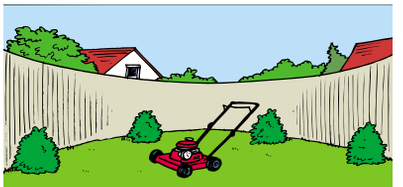

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Public Notices

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Notice is hereby given that on 16 December 2014 **Wm Morrison Supermarkets PLC** applied to South Northamptonshire Council for the grant of a Premises Licence in respect of premises **Morrisons M Local**, 71 High Street, Deanshanger, Milton Keynes MK19 6HR. The proposed licensable activities are the sale by retail of alcohol from 0700 to 2300 hours Monday to Sunday inclusive. Any representation by a responsible authority or any other person regarding this application must be received in writing by: Licensing Department, South Northamptonshire Council, Council Offices, Springfields, Towcester NN12 6AE, e-mail licensing@southnorthants.gov.uk tel: 01327 322117, fax: 01327 359152 no later than 13 January 2015 stating the grounds for representations. The register of South Northamptonshire Council and the record of the application may be inspected by contacting South Northamptonshire Council. It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. The maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence is £5,000.

Licensing Notices

LICENSING ACT 2003

NOTICE FOR WEBSITE OF APPLICATION FOR A NEW PREMISES LICENCE NOTICE is hereby given that: Stantonbury Parish Council
Has applied to **THE LICENSING AUTHORITY AT MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL for a NEW PREMISES LICENCE At**: Parkland adjacent to Constantine Way and Roman Way OS Map reference SP827403. The following licensable activities are proposed during the following times: Live Music between 1800 and 2130 hours on no more than two occasions per year Full details of the application can be viewed via The Licensing Register at the Civic Offices of the Council. This is accessible Mondays to Thursday between the hours of 9am to 5pm, and Fridays 9am to 4pm (excluding bank holidays) or online at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/licensingregister. Any person or responsible authority wishing to make representations either against or in support of the application must do so in writing by the following date: 15th January 2015. To the following address: **LICENSING TEAM,COMMUNITY WELLBEING DIRECTORATE, MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL, CIVIC OFFICES, 1 SAXON GATE EAST, MILTON KEYNES MK9 3EJ, 01908 252800, Email: licensing@milton-keynes.gov.uk.** Representations received in response to this application will ordinarily be made available for public inspection, including disclosure to the applicant and any relevant responsible authorities unless agreed otherwise. Representations must relate to one or more of the licensing objectives (namely crime and disorder, public nuisance, public safety, or protection of children from harm.) It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine of £5,000 is liable on summary conviction for the offence. Dated 18th December 2014
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MKSPORT

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MK Dons goalkeeping coach PAUL HEALD writes exclusively for MK News

WE HAVE been playing consistently well for a number of weeks now and Saturday's performance was the perfect victory to round it all off.

The game against Oldham was the combination of perfect passing, movement and hard work and complemented what the gaffer and Ritchie (Barker) had been doing in training all week.

We are now making sure we get good preparation in ahead of the game against Notts County and making sure we stretch the team in training.

We won't let them rest on their laurels and the players themselves want to stretch themselves in training.

We know we won't always play that well, but the fact that we have a good foundation and we know we have a solid side will put us in good stead.

With Christmas on the horizon it is important that all the training staff work well together to set the right levels of training for players.

We have a number of games in quick succession and we don't want to cause any unnecessary injuries.

It is important that we set the right levels of training in conjunction with Damien Doyle (sports science and fitness) and adopt the right balance.

The players will have strict schedules that makes sure they are pushed appropriately and Karl has great trust in the players.

It is no secret that the players don't have a 'normal' Christmas Day as we play Notts County the day after, but we try to make it as easy as possible.

All the players will be spending Christmas at home with their families and in past years that has usually worked for us.

They will be able to spend time with their children and family but they will have to stick to a strict nutrition plan and make sure they are hydrated. The sports science team can track them with devices and see how well they have worked on the day and whether they have stuck to their plans.

Players steering clear of turkeys

CHRISTMAS is one of the most unpredictable times of the season with a combination of games in quick succession and the weather taking hold…even best made plans can be broken.

But the Dons had a morale-boosting early Christmas present on Saturday, taking Oldham to task and discarding them like the Boxing Day leftovers destined for the dustcart.

Following the FA's dramatic decision for the Chesterfield rematch on January 2, Dons face three games over seven days.

Their next game is away to Notts County on Boxing Day, then at home to Walsall on December 28. This will certainly be a very sapping period for Robinson's men.

Individually, these are three very tough tests. If results go their way, the Dons could become part of a breakaway pack in League One. Poor results, on the other hand, would see the side tumble into the uncertainty of the play-offs.

ICE HOCKEY

Lightning down on festive low

Action stations: Guildford Flames were too hot for Lightning

THERE'S little Christmas cheer for Lightning and their fans as the team go into the festive break in their lowest ever position in the English Premier League.

Two more defeats at the weekend consigned them to seventh spot in the table – and they could be overtaken by Sheffield Steeldogs by the time they play their next league encounter on January 4 against Bracknell Bees. Their next game is an English Challenge Cup only clash with lower league Invicta Dynamos.

On Saturday Lightning fans paid tribute to their Great Britain Under 20 World Championship gold winning trio with a pre-match round of applause for Jordan Hedley, Jordan Cownie and Lewis Hook.

But the night ended in disappointment with two middle period goals from visiting Guildford Flames enough to send them to a 2-1 defeat at MK Arena, while on Sunday they returned home from Altrincham having lost 5-3 to Manchester Phoenix – a team struggling after winning the league last year.

With key players failing to find the net often enough Lightning have looked seriously short of firepower.

Leigh Jamieson – in the past one of the most prolific scorers – registered his first goal in seven outings at Manchester, while recently signed import Marek Curilla has only scored once in the same number of games.

The bulk of the scoring has come from Blaz Emersic on eight goals in that period.

Over the weekend the goal against Guildford Flames came from Milan Kostourek whilst Leigh Jamieson and two from Blaz Emersic took the fight to Manchester Phoenix.

SNOWBOARDING

Snow joke, this boarding lark

BY JACK ASH
editor@mk-news.co.uk

"ALL snowboarders are lazy, just stay laid back," the instructor told me, right about the time my nerves kicked in, a whole world of snow and broken limbs ahead of me.

Wobbling precariously at the foot of a menacing mound of brilliant white, garbed in puffy winter-wear, a snowboard shackled to my feet, this was the first time I'd listened intently to a health and safety briefing.

My mission for the day was to sample a typical lesson at Snozone in Milton Keynes. The fact you're reading this means I survived the day (and no, I'm not typing from a hospital bed).

White Christmas or not, snowboarders and skiers enjoy 1,500 tonnes of real snow at the venue at Xscape. Water is piped through a cooling system and turned into the real thing ready for the slopes.

Instructor Alex Hall, 39, who has been teaching at Snozone for three-and-a-half years, began the lesson by getting me to go backwards down the training slope.

On my tiptoes, in an exercise likened to using the clutch pedal in a car, the more I pushed my heels down, the more of the board was in contact with the snow, thus the faster I went.

This was punishing on the pelvis and calves. For the best part of an hour, Alex watched over as I slowly made my way down the hill. There is a fine line between shuffling slowly and tearing off at break-neck speed. My only option, in most cases, was to helplessly hit the deck, with a face-full of snow.

This is how it starts and over the course of six lessons and plenty of practice, you are expected to be at a level where you can be left to fend for yourself.

So, if the first 30 minutes was somewhat of a joke, next came the punch-line – moving from side to side...or steering.

Balancing is hard enough, but finding the guts to lean to one side (after close shaves, a face of foam and body bathed in bruises) that was easier said than done. It felt a bit like trying to rub my stomach and pat my head at (what felt like) 60mph.

Apres-ski (and you can see I've picked up the lingo if nothing else), I caught up with Snozone snow sports manager Stephen Jordan.

He said: "The busiest period tends to be from New Year all the way through to February half-term. Lots of our customers go on skiing holidays on Boxing Day. When they get back they tend to refine their skills on our slopes."

Far from being a 'laid back' experience, I've never felt so tense. Muscles I never knew I had were singing with agony the following day. If this is what lazy feels like, then I clearly need to do a lot more relaxing to become a snowboarder.

SPORTSSHORTS

NON-LEAGUE FOOTBALL

GOALS from Josh Crawley, Robert MacDonald and two from Dominic Lawless saw Newport Pagnell bring an end to Long Buckby's three-game winning streak. The win leaves Newport seventh.

The Swans even had the luxury of being able to miss a penalty in the second-half as Buckby keeper James Broadbent saved well from Josh Crawley.

Crawley did open the scoring against his former club, though. After two minutes Nkosi Mzungwana got one back for the home side but Dominic Lawless and Robert MacDonald secured the win.

Meanwhile, Olney lost their game 1-0, which sees the side in ninth position going into the Christmas break.

Jamie Russell scored the vital goal three minutes before half-time.

BADMINTON

GABBY and Chris Adcock lost their last championship of the year.

The husband and wife pair were dumped out of the BWF Destination Dubai World Superseries Finals against China's world number one pair.

England's top mixed doubles pair, who ended 2014 as world number six, were well beaten by Nan Zhang and Tunlei Zhao 21-9 21-12.

The pair's preparation for the game had been blighted for Gabby, who picked up a chest infection while they were in Dubai.

ATHLETICS

THREE Milton Keynes athletes finished the season as UK number ones including Olympian Greg Rutherford, who jumped the furthest in the world this year with 8m51.

Devon Byrne is top ranked in the UK under 23 Heptathlon with a best score of 5004pts at Bedford while Freddie Curtis is number one in the under 20 men's javelin with a throw of 71m83 in Finland.

RUGBY

OLNEY Rugby Club saw off Market Harborough 29-8.

Tries from Brandon Kerr, George Stanton and two from Will Edwards, plus conversions by Jas Hawken, saw Olney to victory on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Milton Keynes lost 7-29 to top of the table Wycombe.

The game, which was tighter than the score suggested, saw Dan Wolfe get the home side's only try.

Some sloppy play from Milton Keynes cost them on the day.

HANDBALL

THE Oly Cats under-18 side finished 2014 by narrowly missing out on a place in the Super 5, after they won one and lost one of their National U18 Boys League fixtures in Wolverhampton on Sunday.

The division splits into two during 2015, with the top five sides competing in the Super 5 tournament and the remaining four going head-to-head for the Championship, which the Oly Cats will now compete for.

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Lightning make heavy weather of things near the bottom – page 39

No Deli deal message to Premiership

BY JACK ASH
editor@mk-news.co.uk

DONS manager Karl Robinson has tipped 'superstar' midfielder Dele Alli for Premiership success but has warned rival clubs to keep their hands off him.

Alli has been attracting plenty of attention from clubs, rumoured to include Liverpool and Arsenal, but Robinson is adamant the 18-year-old is 'not for sale' in January.

He believes that, for MK Dons to succeed, Alli, *pictured below*, must remain at the League One club. He said: "If we want to be contenders this year he can't go."

And, according to Robinson, staying put at stadiummk is also in the best interests for the England under-19, which will see him develop into a 'more rounded player'.

Though Robinson would not be drawn on a figure for Alli, he said: "It's unfair to put a price tag on the lad's head, we have an internal figure, which is very high."

But Robinson has not ruled out the idea of a club signing the player and loaning him back to the Dons. He said: "There is the possibility that the longer he stays here the price increases.

"When you consider that players have [sold] from the league below for over a million pounds and [Ali] has been scoring more goals from midfield, [then, considering that Alli is] from the league above, and [is] younger, you are talking a lot of money.

And, Robinson warned other clubs eyeing his players ahead of the January transfer window that 'no-one at this football club is for sale.'

Alli has been at MK Dons since he was 11 years old and, after recent performances, Robinson labelled him a 'superstar'.

A deadly partnership between Alli and fellow midfielder Darren Potter has blossomed in the past few seasons, with Robinson believing the pair complement each other well.

He said: "Darren has propelled Dele and allowed him to be who he needs to be...I think when he looks back at playing alongside Potts (Darren Potter) it will be with very fond memories."

Alli is one of the brightest English talents in the game at the moment but Robinson still thinks there is room for improvement. He added: "I don't think we are reaching his peaks, but the next stage of his development will be Premier League."

The Dons manager believes the overall state of English football is on the up and players such as Jack Wilshire, Ross Barkley and Ruben Loftus-Cheek, along with Dele, are all exciting prospects.

Robinson was also quick to point to other talented youngsters the club has produced including Giorgio Rasulo, Sam Baldock, George Williams and Gary McKenzie.

Magnificent seven: Darren Potter shoots past Oldham's Paddy Kenny to add to MK Dons' goal fest on Saturday

Seven heaven moves Dons up

WILL Grigg helped himself to two goals as MK Dons smashed Oldham Athletic 7-0 and set a club record for the most amount of goals in one game.

The victory moves MK Dons into the automatic promotion places and boss Karl Robinson described the win as: 'sensational.'

Robinson admitted that the side were wary of Oldham, adding: "We were really fearful before the game and worked super hard in the build-up."

On top of Will Grigg's double, Dean Bowditch, Darren Potter, Dele Alli, Benik Afobe and Carl Baker all got on the score-sheet.

Following the game Robinson picked out Darren Potter's goal as his pick of the bunch.

Robinson hopes that the recent results and amount of goals sends a clear message to the rest of the league.

So far this season Dons have notched up 30 goals at stadiummk, which has already surpassed the whole of last season, where they scored 27 at home.

Robinson admits that the win has breathed confidence into his squad and that come the end of the season the goal tally could become very important.

The manager is not only pleased with the results but the way in which they are being achieved. He said: "We are in a good position. We're not scrapping games 1-0, we're convincingly dominating games."

Robinson was pleased to send Dons fans home with an early Christmas present. He said: "I'm so happy for our fans – they can certainly go and celebrate."